Micah
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Micah

Chapter 1

The word of G OD that came to Micah the Morashtite, who prophesied concerning Samaria and Jerusalem in the reigns of Kings Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah of Judah.
Listen, all you peoples, Give heed, O earth, and all it holds; And let the Sovereign G OD be your accuser— The Sovereign from the holy abode.
For lo! G OD Is coming forth from the heavenly a the heavenly Lit. “His.” dwelling-place— To come down and stride Upon the heights of the earth.
The mountains shall melt underfoot And the valleys burst open— Like wax before fire, Like water cascading down a slope.
All this is for the transgression of Jacob, And for the sins of the House of Israel. What is the transgression of Jacob But Samaria, And what the shrines b shrines Emendation yields “sins.” of Judah But Jerusalem?
So I will turn Samaria Into a ruin in open country, Into ground for planting vineyards; For I will tumble her stones into the valley And lay her foundations bare.
All her sculptured images shall be smashed, And all her prostitute’s wealth c her prostitute’s wealth I.e., the bounty of offerings dedicated to idols. be burned, And I will make a waste heap of all her idols, For they were amassed from fees for prostitution, And they shall become prostitute’s fees again.
Because of this I will lament and wail; I will go stripped and naked! I will lament as sadly as the jackals, As mournfully as the ostriches.
For the nation’s d the nation’s Heb. “her.” wound is incurable, It has reached Judah, It has spread to the gate of my people, To Jerusalem.
e Meaning of much of vv. 10–13 uncertain. They may refer to the transfer of part of western Judah to Philistine rule by Sennacherib of Assyria in the year 701 B CE. Tell it not in Gath, Refrain from weeping; f Tell it not … weeping So that enemies may not gloat; cf. 2 Sam. 1.20. In Beth-leaphrah, Strew dust g dust Heb. ‘aphar, a play on Beth-leaphrah; vv. 10–15 contain several similar puns. over your [head].
Pass on, inhabitants of Shaphir! Did not the inhabitants of Zaanan Have to go forth naked in shame? There is lamentation in Beth-ezel— It will withdraw its support from you.
Though the inhabitants of Maroth Hoped for good, Yet disaster from G OD descended Upon the gate of Jerusalem.
Hitch the steeds to the chariot, Inhabitant of Lachish! It is the beginning Of Fair Zion’s guilt; Israel’s transgressions Can be traced to you!
Truly, you must give a farewell gift To Moresheth-gath. The houses of Achzib are h The houses of Achzib are Emendation yields “Fair Achzib is.” To the kings of Israel Like a spring that fails.
A dispossessor will I bring to you Who dwell in Mareshah; At Adullam the glory Of Israel shall set.
Shear off your hair and make yourself bald i make yourself bald A common rite of mourning; cf. Jer. 7.29. For the children you once delighted in; Make yourself as bald as a vulture, For they have been banished from you.

Chapter 2

Ah, those who plan iniquity And design evil on their beds; When morning dawns, they do it, For they have the power.
They covet fields, and seize them; Houses, and take them away. They defraud men of their homes, And people of their land.
Assuredly, thus said G OD : I am planning such a misfortune against this clan that you will not be able to free your necks from it. You will not be able to walk erect; it will be such a time of disaster.
In that day, One shall recite a poem about you, And utter a bitter lament, And shall say: "My people's portion changes hands; How it slips away from me! Our field is allotted to a rebel. a rebel Emendation yields "ravager." We are utterly ravaged." b My people's portion … ravaged Meaning of Heb. uncertain.
Truly, none of you Shall cast a lot cord c cast a lot cord On a piece of land, thus acquiring title to it; cf. Josh. 18.6 and Ps. 16.6. In the assembly of G OD!
"Stop preaching!" they preach. "That's no way to preach; Shame shall not overtake [us].
Is the House of Jacob condemned? d Shame … condemned Meaning of Heb. uncertain. Is G OD 's patience short? Has such been the practice?" To be sure, My words are friendly To those who walk in rectitude;
But an enemy arises against e an enemy arises against Meaning of Heb. uncertain; emendation yields "you arise as enemies against." My people. You strip the mantle with the cloak f with the cloak Meaning of Heb. uncertain; emendation yields "off peaceful folk." Off such as pass unsuspecting, Who are turned away from war. g Who are turned away from war Meaning of Heb. uncertain.
You drive the women of My people away From their pleasant homes; You deprive their infants Of My glory forever.
Up and depart! This is no resting place Because of [your] defilement. Terrible destruction shall befall. h Because of … befall Meaning of Heb. uncertain.
If someone were to go about uttering Windy, baseless falsehoods: "I'll preach to you in favor of wine and liquor"— That would be a preacher [acceptable] to this people.
i This verse and the next may offer another example of the "acceptable" preaching mentioned in v. 11. I will assemble Jacob, all of you; I will bring together the remnant of Israel; I will make them all like sheep of Bozrah, j of Bozrah Emendation yields "in a fold [Arabic sīrah]." Like a flock inside its pen k pen Meaning of Heb. uncertain. — They will be noisy with people.
One who makes a breach Goes before them; They enlarge it to a gate And leave by it. Their king marches before them,
G OD
at their head.

Chapter 3

I said: Listen, you rulers of Jacob, You chiefs of the House of Israel! For you ought to know what is right,
a Syntax of this verse and the next uncertain. But you hate good and love evil.
You have devoured My people's flesh; You have flayed the skin off them, And their flesh off their bones. And after tearing their skins off them, And their flesh off their bones, b And after tearing their skins off them, / And their flesh off their bones Moved down from v. 2 for clarity. And breaking their bones to bits, You have cut it up as into c as into

Meaning of Heb. uncertain; Septuagint and Syriac read “like flesh in.” a pot, Like meat in a cauldron.
Someday they shall cry out to G OD, But they will not be answered; At that time the divine face will be hidden, In accordance with the wrongs they have done.
Thus said G OD to the prophets Who lead My people astray, Who cry “Peace!” When they have something to chew, But launch a war on those Who fail to fill their mouths:
Assuredly, It shall be night for you So that you cannot prophesy, And it shall be dark for you So that you cannot divine; The sun shall set on the prophets, And the day shall be darkened for them.
The seers shall be shamed And the diviners confounded; They shall cover their upper lips, d cover their upper lips As a sign of mourning; cf. Ezek. 24.17, 22; Lev. 13.45. Because no response comes from God.
But I, I am filled with strength by the spirit of G OD, And with judgment and courage, To declare to Jacob his transgressions And to Israel his sin.
Hear this, you rulers of the House of Jacob, You chiefs of the House of Israel, Who detest justice And make crooked all that is straight,
Who build Zion with crime, Jerusalem with iniquity!
Her rulers judge for gifts, Her priests give rulings for a fee, And her prophets divine for pay; Yet they rely upon G OD, saying, “ G OD is in our midst; No calamity shall overtake us.”
Assuredly, because of you Zion shall be plowed as a field, Jerusalem shall become heaps of ruins And the Temple Mount a shrine in the woods.

Chapter 4

a Cf. Isa. 2.2–4. In the days to come, The Mount of G OD ’s House shall stand Firm above the mountains; And it shall tower above the hills. The peoples shall gaze on it with joy,
And the many nations shall go and shall say: “Come, Let us go up to the Mount of G OD, To the House of the God of Jacob; That we may be instructed in God’s ways, And that we may walk in godly paths.” For instruction shall come forth b instruction shall come forth I.e., oracles will be obtainable. from Zion, The word of G OD from Jerusalem.
Thus [God] will judge among the many peoples, And arbitrate for the multitude of nations, However distant; And they shall beat their swords into plowshares c plowshares More exactly, the iron points with which wooden plows were tipped. And their spears into pruning hooks. Nation shall not take up Sword against nation; They shall never again know d know Cf. Judg. 3.2. war;
But every family shall sit Under its own vine and fig tree With no one to disturb them. For it was G OD of Hosts who spoke.
Though all the peoples walk Each in the names of its gods, We will walk In the name of the E TERNAL our God Forever and ever.
In that day —declares G OD — I will assemble the lame [sheep] And will gather the outcast And those I have treated harshly;
And I will turn the lame into a remnant And the expelled e expelled Meaning of Heb. uncertain; emendation yields “weaklings”; cf. Ezek. 34.4. into a populous nation. And G OD will reign over them on Mount Zion Now and for evermore.
And you, O Migdal-eder, f Migdal-eder Apparently near Bethlehem; see Gen. 35.19–21. Outpost of Fair Zion, It shall come to you: g Outpost of Fair Zion, / It shall come to you Meaning of Heb. uncertain. The former monarchy shall return— The kingship of Fair Jerusalem. h Fair Jerusalem Emendation yields “the House of Israel”; cf. 5.1–2.
Now why do you utter such cries? Is there no king in you, Have your advisors perished, That you have been seized by writhing Like a woman in travail?

Writhe and scream, i scream Meaning of Heb. uncertain. Fair Zion, Like a woman in travail! For now you must leave the city And dwell in the country— And you will reach Babylon. There you shall be saved, There G OD will redeem you From the hands of your foes.
Indeed, many nations Have assembled against you Who think, “Let our eye Obscenely gaze j Obscenely gaze Meaning of Heb. uncertain. on Zion.”
But they do not know G OD ’s design, They do not divine the intent: They have been gathered Like cut grain to the threshing floor.
Up and thresh, Fair Zion! For I will give you horns of iron And provide you with hoofs of bronze, And you will crush the many peoples. You k You Heb. -ti serves here as the ending of the second-person singular feminine; cf. Judg. 5.7 and note; Jer. 2.20; etc. will devote their riches to G OD, Their wealth to the Sovereign of all the earth.
Now you gash yourself in grief. l in grief Meaning of Heb. uncertain. They have laid siege to us; They strike the ruler of Israel On the cheek with a staff.

Chapter 5

And you, O Bethlehem of Ephrath, a Ephrath The clan to which the Bethlehemites belonged; see 1 Sam. 17.12; Ruth 1.2; 4.11. Least among the clans of Judah, From you one shall come forth To rule Israel for Me— One whose origin is from of old, From ancient times.
b Meaning of verse uncertain. Truly, [God] will leave them [helpless] Until she who is to bear has borne; c has borne I.e., has given birth to a ruler, shepherd (v. 3), to deliver Israel from the Assyrians (vv. 4-5). Then the rest of his kindred Shall return to the children of Israel.
He shall stand and shepherd By the might of G OD, By the power of the name Of the E TERNAL his God, And they shall dwell [secure]. For lo, he shall wax great To the ends of the earth;
And that shall afford safety. Should Assyria invade our land And tread upon our fortresses, d fortresses Septuagint and Syriac read “soil”; cf. v. 5. We will set up over that nation e that nation Heb. “it.” seven shepherds, Eight princes of other nations, f other nations Lit. “human beings.”
Who will shepherd Assyria’s land with swords, The land of Nimrod in its gates. g in its gates Emendation yields “with drawn blades”; cf. Ps. 37.14; 55.22. Thus he will deliver [us] From Assyria, should it invade our land, And should it trample our country.
The remnant of Jacob shall be, In the midst of the many peoples, Like dew from G OD, Like droplets on grass— Which do not look to anybody Nor place their hope in mortals.
The remnant of Jacob Shall be among the nations, In the midst of the many peoples, Like a lion among beasts of the wild, Like a fierce lion among flocks of sheep, Which tramples wherever it goes And rends, with none to deliver.
Your hand shall prevail over your foes, And all your enemies shall be cut down!
In that day —declares G OD — I will destroy the horses in your midst And wreck your chariots.
I will destroy the cities of your land And demolish all your fortresses.
I will destroy the sorcery you practice, And you shall have no more soothsayers.
I will destroy your idols And the sacred pillars in your midst; And no more shall you bow down To the work of your hands.
I will tear down the sacred posts h sacred posts Used in worship of the goddess Asherah. in your midst And destroy your cities. i cities Emendation yields “idols.”
In anger and wrath Will I wreak retribution On the nations j nations Emendation yields “arrogant.” that have not obeyed.

Chapter 6

Hear what G OD is saying: Come, present [My] case before the mountains,
And let the hills hear you pleading.
Hear, you mountains, G OD ’s case— You firm a You firm Emendation yields
“Give ear, you.” foundations of the earth! For G OD has a case against
this covenanted people— A suit against Israel.
“My people! What wrong have I done you? What hardship have I caused you?
Testify against Me.
In fact, I brought you up from the land of Egypt, I redeemed you from the
house of bondage, And I sent before you Moses, Aaron, and Miriam.
“My people, Remember what Balak king of Moab Plotted against you, And how
Balaam son of Beor Responded to him. [Recall your passage] From Shittim
to Gilgal b From Shittim to Gilgal I.e., the crossing of the Jordan; see
Josh. 3.1, 14–4.19. — And you will recognize G OD ’s gracious acts.”
With what shall I approach G OD, Do homage to God on high? Shall I
approach with burnt offerings, With calves a year old?
Would G OD be pleased with thousands of rams, With myriads of streams of
oil? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, The fruit of my
body for my sins?
“You have been told, O mortal, what is good, And what G OD requires of
you: Only to do justice And to love goodness, And to walk modestly with
your God; c to walk modestly with your God Or “it is prudent to serve
your God.”
Then will your name achieve wisdom.” d Then will your name achieve wisdom
Emendation yields “And it is worthwhile to revere God’s name.” Hark! G OD
Summons the city: e the city Apparently the capital of either the
northern or southern kingdom. Hear, O scepter; For who can direct her
but you? f Hear … but you? Meaning of Heb. uncertain. Will I overlook, g
overlook Taking ’ish as from nashah “to forget”; cf. Deut. 32.18. in
houses of the wicked, The granaries of wickedness And the accursed short
ephah? h short ephah Cf. Amos 8.4–5.
Shall they i they Heb. “I”; change of vocalization yields “Will I acquit
them.” be acquitted despite wicked balances And a bag of fraudulent
weights?—
j This verse would read well after “city” in v. 9. Whose wealthy are full
of lawlessness, And whose inhabitants speak treachery, With tongues of
deceit in their mouths.
I, in turn, have beaten you sore, Have stunned [you] for your sins:
You have been eating without getting your fill, And there is a gnawing at
your vitals; You have been conceiving without bearing young, k And there
is a gnawing … bearing young Meaning of Heb. uncertain. And what you bore
I would deliver to the sword.
You have been sowing, but have nothing to reap; You have trod olives, but
have no oil for rubbing, And grapes l grapes Lit. “new wine.” but have no
wine to drink.
Yet you have kept m you have kept Heb. “is kept.” the laws of Omri, And
all the practices of the House of Ahab, And have followed what they
devised. Therefore I will make you an object of horror And the city’s n
the city’s Heb. “her”; cf. v. 9. inhabitants an object of hissing; o
hissing See note at Jer. 18.16. And you shall bear the mockery of
peoples. p peoples Heb. “My people.”

Chapter 7

Woe is me! a me The speaker is feminine (cf. ’Elohayikh, v. 10), probably
Samaria personified; cf. note at 6.16. I am become like leavings of a fig
harvest, Like gleanings when the vintage is over, There is not a cluster
to eat, Not a ripe fig I could desire.

The pious are vanished from the land, None upright are left among its people; All lie in wait to commit crimes, Every last one traps the other in a net.
b Meaning of verse uncertain. They are eager to do evil: The magistrate makes demands, And the judge [judges] for a fee; The rich one makes a crooked plea, And they grant it.
The best of them is like a prickly shrub; The [most] upright, worse than a barrier of thorns. On the day you waited for, c On the day you waited for Meaning of Heb. uncertain. your doom has come— Now their confusion shall come to pass.
Trust no friend, Rely on no intimate; Be guarded in speech With her who lies in your bosom.
For son spurns father, Daughter rises up against mother, Daughter-in-law against mother-in-law— A man's own household Are his enemies.
Yet I will look to G OD, I will wait for the God who saves me, My God will hear me.
Do not rejoice over me, O my enemy! d enemy Heb. feminine, apparently referring to Damascus. Though I have fallen, I rise again; Though I sit in darkness, G OD is my light.
I must bear G OD 's anger — Against whom I have sinned, Until my cause is championed And my claim upheld. I will be brought out into the light; I will enjoy divine vindication.
When my enemy e enemy See note at v. 8. sees it, She shall be covered with shame, She who taunts me with "Where is this God of yours, the E TERNAL One?" My eyes shall behold her [downfall]; Lo, she shall be for trampling Like mud in the streets.
A day for mending your walls f walls To keep out tramplers (end of preceding verse); cf. Isa. 5.5; Ps. 80.13-14. — That is a far-off day.
This is rather a day when to you [Tramplers] will come streaming From Assyria and the towns of Egypt— From [every land from] Egypt to the Euphrates, From sea to sea and from mountain to mountain—
And your g your Heb. "the." land shall become a desolation— Because of those who dwell in it— As the fruit of their misdeeds.
Oh, shepherd Your people with Your staff, Your very own flock. May they who dwell isolated In a woodland surrounded by farmland h In a woodland surrounded by farmland I.e., the land west of the Jordan, which is represented as far less fertile than adjacent regions. Graze i Graze Emendation yields "possess." Bashan and Gilead As in olden days.
I will show him j I will show him Emendation yields "Show us." wondrous deeds As in the days when You sallied forth from the land of Egypt.
Let nations behold and be ashamed Despite all their might; Let them put hand to mouth; Let their ears be deafened!
Let them lick dust like snakes, Like crawling things on the ground! Let them come trembling out of their strongholds k Let them come trembling out of their strongholds Meaning of Heb. uncertain. To the E TERNAL our God; Let them fear and dread You!
Who is a God like You, Forgiving iniquity And remitting transgression— Not staying angry forever Toward the remnant of Your own people, Because You l Your…You Heb. 3rd person. love graciousness!
[God] will take us back in love, Quashing m Quashing Or, perhaps, "Forgiving," as in Akkadian kabasu. our iniquities. You will hurl all our n our Heb. "their." sins Into the depths of the sea.
You will keep faith with Jacob, Loyalty to Abraham, As You promised on oath to our fathers In days gone by.